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Initiatives



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H T Parekh
FOUNDATION

KHPT
engage, innovate, empower



Sphoorthi Bi-Monthly

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ABOUT US

KHPT is a not-for-profit organization that spearheads focused initiatives to improve the health and well-being of communities in India, since 2003. KHPT's four key thematic include Maternal, Neonatal & Child Health (MNCH), Tuberculosis (TB), Adolescent Health (AH), and Comprehensive Primary Health Care (CPHC). The unique DNA of our programs is a combination of evidence generation, grassroots community connections and government relationships.

The Adolescent Thematic focuses on gender-based empowerment programmes to address malnutrition, menstrual hygiene, gender-based violence and mental health of adolescent girls, particularly across the Kalyana Karnataka region. KHPT's 'Sphoorthi' adolescent girls empowerment program has been scaled up by the Government of Karnataka to prevent child marriages. The Sphoorthi model works to build 'power within' adolescent girls through life skills education, leadership and communication training, exposure visits and sports camps; improves parent-daughter relationships to build girls 'power with' significant stakeholders, and encourages community level participation of girls to gain 'power over' or access to community resources.

EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVES

1. Role Model Girls trained in Interactive Intimate Theatre techniques

598 Role Model Girls across the Sphoorthi project were trained in Interactive Intimate Theatre (IIT) techniques by KHPT staff. During the second week of October, the girls were equipped with various skills which included script writing, modulating voice and choreography and making them understand the importance of IIT as a tool for communication, self-expression, and community engagement. The girls are using IIT as a medium to start conversations with relevant stakeholders and create a personal and immersive experience for the audience, where they not only observe the story but also become integral participants.



Adolescent girls engaging with the audience in their village

WHAT ARE OUR GIRLS UP TO?

1. Sphoorthi girls participate in International Day of the Girl Child celebrations

On 11th October, Sphoorthi girls from seven districts including Koppal, Yadgir, Raichur, Bagalkot, Kalaburagi, Raichur, and Belagavi celebrated the International Day of the Girl Child by participating in various activities. They rallied in villages, participated in essay writing competitions, and met community leaders to highlight the problems they faced. The girls took centre stage and requested support from their parents and community members to fulfil their goals.

"We went around town and all the residents took notice of what we had to say." Swathi, Yadgir



Girls taking out a rally in Belagavi

2. Adolescent girls perform a folk song as part of the Balya Vivaha Muktha Karnataka Andolana

On 16 October 2023, an awareness program was conducted at Morarji Desai School Tankankal, Koppal district as part of Balya Vivaha Muktha Karnataka Andolana, to prevent child marriages. The event was chaired by the District Magistrate, Mr Devendrappa Pandit and attended by Lawyer Hanumanthappa, Deputy Director of the Women and Child Welfare Department, Koppal district Mr Tippana, and Mrs Jayashree, Koppal taluk's Child Development Project Officer. Three adolescent girls from the Sphoorthi project and KHPT's Koppal staff were also present. Mr. Tippanna led the gathering in taking an oath to eradicate child marriage, emphasizing the community's commitment to this cause.



Koppal staff with district officials taking oath

3. Sphoorthi girls participate in special gram sabhas on Gandhi Jayanthi

A special gram sabha was organised on Gandhi Jayanthi across many Gram Panchayats in Koppal. The adolescent girls took this opportunity to voice out the issues in their villages including child marriages, school dropouts, and irregular supply of sanitary pads and water in their villages. In Gedenigere village, the girls submitted a letter requesting the Panchayat Development Officer to recruit a Physical Education Teacher in their school.



Adolescent girls during the special gram sabha

DISTRICTS' CORNER

1. The Deputy Commissioner of Kalaburagi chairs their first District Coordination and Executive Committee meeting

The first meeting of the District Coordination and Executive Committee (DCEC) for Kalaburagi was held on 6 October. The meeting was chaired by Mrs. Fauzia Tarannum, Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Kalaburagi. Shri Bhanwar Singh Meena, CEO and Mr. Navinkumar, Deputy Director of WCD, and other key officials participated in the meeting.

Mr. Shivayogi, the District Program Coordinator of Sphoorthi, Kalaburagi, presented the goals, objectives, and progress of the project. The DC interacted with ten Role Model Adolescent Girls to understand the positive impact of the Sphoorthi project on their lives. The DC appreciated the adolescent girls for being outspoken and leading the other girls in their villages.



The DC Ms Fauzia Tarannum interacting with the Role Model Girls

2. Newly recruited staff trained in social behaviour change communication strategies

A new nutrition project, supported by the H T Parekh Foundation, is being implemented in Koppal district with a focus on improving the nutritional status of adolescent girls, newborns, pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers. The project also adopts a social and behavioural change communication strategy to achieve better nutrition and health outcomes.

The 57 newly recruited staff were oriented on topics like sex and gender, maternal and adolescent nutrition, menstrual health and newborn feeding practices, between 26-28 September. The topics covered gave the staff knowledge and skills for influencing positive changes among adolescent girls and pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers



The newly recruited staff interacting with the trainer

3. KHPT trains master trainers to build skills among older adolescent girls

A two-day orientation and workshop on work, and livelihood opportunities available for Sphoorthi girls, between the ages of 18-21 was organised in KHPT's Koppal office between 4-6 September. The girls who will receive the intervention have already received the Sphoorthi intervention between 2015-2018. The training was jointly conducted by KHPT and Samvada organization. The aim of the workshop was not to focus on training girls on any specific livelihood skills but to encourage girls to develop an orientation towards livelihood, understand how the economy and labour market function, critically plan to realize their aspirations and gain the skills to negotiate this.



Adolescent girls in a group work activity

OTHER UPDATES

1. The Adolescent Health team presents its findings from its research studies on Research Day

The Monitoring & Evaluation team of Adolescent Health thematic presented findings from its research studies during KHPT's Research Day on 12 October. The team presented findings from three studies, including an innovative approach of mapping vulnerabilities among adolescent girls; a study on the nutrition status of adolescent girls in the northern Kalyan Karnataka region; and a study on empowerment and its importance in the adolescent context.



M&E team making a presentation

The Research Day was chaired by Dr M K Sudarshan, KHPT Trustee and Chairman, Karnataka Covid-19 Technical Advisory Committee, Government of Karnataka (GoK), and an expert panel comprising, of Dr Veena, Deputy Director – Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram, Dr Edmond Fernandes, Director, Edward & Cynthia Institute of Public Health, Mangalore, and Dr Balu PS, Director, Centre for Digital Health, Artificial Intelligence, Research and Training, Basaveshwara Medical College, Chitradurga, participated on this occasion.

2. Sphoorthi staff attend a two-day workshop on qualitative study monitoring techniques

A two-day workshop in qualitative study monitoring techniques was conducted between 14-15 October, in Bengaluru for the district Documentation Officers (DOs) and District Project Coordinators (DPCs) of the Government of Karnataka-supported Sphoorthi project. The workshop was conducted by KHPT's central research team to build the capacity of the DOs and DPCs to document the impact of Sphoorthi on adolescent girls, and the community as a whole. The results from the qualitative study will aid in developing strategies for potential course correction within the program.



Our district staff during the workshop

STORY FROM THE FIELD

The temple of Basveshvara is a popular destination among the people of Makkalgeri Gram Panchayat in Gokak taluk, Belagavi district. In October mid-week, a group of adolescent girls sought to engage community members and sensitize them through an Intimate Interactive Theatre (IIT) session. With their singing, dancing, and interaction with the audience, the girls proved talented performers. They sought to bring to discussion the issue of child marriage, which plagued their panchayat through a 15-minute play.

One villager was motivated to confess the truth to two local ASHA workers after the event. The community member revealed that five girls between the ages of 14-17 in the Makkalgeri Gram Panchayat were engaged. The ASHA workers were startled by this information and immediately informed our Community Organizer (CO) Sunitha* and Field Coordinator (FC) Pavithra* after a week of the show. Upon hearing this, the CO and FC were determined to take action and save the lives of these young girls.

“I was scared initially as I was not sure how to deal with this. But we worked as a team to help the girls,” says our FC.

The CO and FC, after knowing their names visited the homes of these girls and interacted with the parents as well; and later submitted a letter having details of the five girls and their families to the Child Development Project Officer. The Officer intervened and counselled the parents on the negative impact of child marriage on girls and made the families sign a bond paper, a legally enforceable document that they would get the girls married only when they turned 18 years.

IIT has struck a chord among the rural people, the girls are creating awareness and discovering solutions to their challenges, leveraging community support to bring positive changes in their villages, through such innovative methods

*- names changed to protect the identity



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